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## Reply to letter of comment ‘Trans-metatarsal amputation as a complication of child sexual abuse’

Sir,

The authors have become aware of a comment<sup>1</sup> on our article titled “Trans-metatarsal amputation as a complication of child sexual abuse”.<sup>2</sup> The comment was not critical of our case study, but instead sought to provide a political commentary on the social context of child maltreatment in Turkey. Some of the comments in the response by John Puntis and H. Kirpalani related to Turkish governments’ actions to improve child protection not being compatible with UN Convention on Children’s Rights and human rights violations involving adolescents under 18 years of age, which should not be part of a democratic society, are indeed true. However, the interest of the authors of the original article in child abuse and neglect and its prevention was directed in the first place at improving professional medical, social, and legal care to abused and neglected children. Indirectly, the article also could be seen as reflective of their interest in improving professional participation in the democratization of their society, as well. The fact remains, nevertheless, that what we published was a case study that called for heightened vigilance when it comes to matters of child protection in societies where professional training and standards are in relatively early stages of development.

The commentators’ claim that this mismanagement represents a “deeper malaise within a society where the most vulnerable count for little” is not acceptable since this state of child protection services is not unique to Turkey, but is shared among many developing countries, even by some relatively more developed countries (personal experience in grant reviewing on projects from Europe). We share the perspective of Puntis and Kirpalani that child protection professionals everywhere need to be aware of the systematic abuse of youth by states and non-state agents (societal abuse) and in addition to that of global child abuse as well, as in the case of wars. Yet, this is hardly the thrust of our research and reporting. Poorer countries in the world, like Turkey, may be faulted for not allocating a greater share of resources for child protection, but attributing the failure to do so to a deeper societal malaise is an unnecessarily broad leap that would label majority of the world’s population into this category.<sup>3</sup> The wealthy nations of the world have hardly resolved the issue of child abuse. If this journal were the place to politicize such issues in terms of national ideologies, then certainly some among us, vigilant to protect children everywhere in the world, would be raising concerns about tens of thousands of innocents caught in the path of military adventure especially following unjustified invasion of certain regions of the world. As it is, our article was about a serious episode of abuse mismanaged by some of the professionals who encountered him on entry to the medical system and after involvement with the legal system. All the good people of Turkey would be deeply saddened by the event. The authors did take the initiative to share this report

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with the local and regional authorities after the case unfolded the way it was reported.

## References

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3. Africa's world of forced labor, through the eyes of a 6 year-old. New York Times; October 29th, 2006, p. 8–9.

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